

comprising:

providing a mixture consisting essentially of a reducing sugar and a hydroxide of an alkali metal;

subjecting said mixture to heat treatment for a time and under conditions sufficient to produce a flavorful caramel composition;

applying said flavorful composition to a tobacco leaf or cut filler made thereof; and

preparing a smoking article comprising said tobacco leaf or cut filler.

16. (New) The method of Claim 15, wherein said hydroxide is sodium hydroxide.

17. (New) The method of Claim 15, wherein said reducing sugar is fructose.

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~~3634~~ 18. (New) The method of Claim 15, wherein the heat treatment is conducted at a temperature of at least about 150°C.

19. (New) The method of Claim 15, wherein the heat treatment is conducted under a pressure of from about 20 psig to about 500 psig.

20. (New) A smoking article prepared by the process of Claim 15.

21. (New) The method of Claim 15, wherein the hydroxide is present in an amount of less than about 30 weight percent on a water-free basis.

22. (New) The method of Claim 21, wherein the hydroxide is present in an amount of about 0.5 to about 10 weight percent on a water-free basis.

~~3635~~ 23. (New) The method of Claim 2, wherein the hydroxide is present in an amount of less than about 30 weight percent on a water-free basis.